

2025 College Free Speech Rankings

University of Virginia

1
OVERALL
RANK

GOOD

SPEECH
CLIMATE

GREEN

SPOTLIGHT
RATING



FIRE
Foundation for Individual
Rights and Expression

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Executive Summary

FOR THE FIFTH YEAR IN A ROW, the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE), a nonprofit organization committed to defending and sustaining the individual rights of all Americans to free speech and free thought, and College Pulse surveyed college undergraduates about their perceptions and experiences regarding free speech on their campuses.

This year's survey includes 58,807 student respondents from 257 colleges and universities. Students who were enrolled in four-year degree programs were surveyed via the College Pulse mobile app and web portal from January 25 through June 17, 2024.

The College Free Speech Rankings are available online and are presented in an interactive dashboard (rankings.thefire.org) that allows for easy comparison between institutions.

University of Virginia-Main Campus was one of the 257 schools surveyed. Key findings from this school include:

- A ranking of 1 overall, with an overall score of 73.41 and a “Good” speech climate.
- A good performance on “Openness” (54), “Tolerance of Liberal Speakers” (70), “Tolerance of Conservative Speakers” (95), and “Administrative Support” (97) but a middling “Tolerance Difference” ranking of 150.
- A mediocre performance on “Comfort Expressing Ideas” and “Self-Censorship,” ranking 107 and 112 respectively.
- A poor performance on “Disruptive Conduct,” ranking 200.
- A strong record of supporting invited speakers who have undergone disinvitation attempts.
- Maintaining speech policies that earn it a “green light” rating from FIRE.

Full Report

IN 2020, FIRE, in collaboration with College Pulse and RealClearEducation, launched a first-of-its-kind tool to help high school students and their parents identify which colleges promote and protect the free exchange of ideas: the College Free Speech Rankings. The response to the rankings report and corresponding online tool was overwhelmingly positive.

This year FIRE and College Pulse surveyed 257 schools, ranking 251 of them.¹ The University of Virginia-Main Campus, with a score of 73.41, has a good speech climate and ranks 1 overall in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings.

HOW COMFORTABLE ARE UVA STUDENTS EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS ON CONTROVERSIAL TOPICS?

University of Virginia-Main Campus (UVA) ranks 107 on the “Comfort Expressing Ideas” component.

Students at UVA feel the greatest levels of comfort expressing disagreement with one of their professors about a controversial political topic in a written assignment (53%) and expressing their views on a controversial political topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space such as a quad, dining hall, or lounge (53%). In 2021, these percentages were 52% and 50% respectively.

However, students feel less comfortable when publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial political topic (38%), expressing their views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion (47%), and expressing an unpopular political opinion to their fellow students on a social media account tied to their name (38%). Fortunately, these numbers have increased since 2021 (from 30%, 44%, and 24%, respectively).

These increases in comfort over the past few years demonstrate that UVA students self-censor less and self-express more. However, there remains the concern that UVA students are most uncomfortable expressing themselves when publicly discussing controversial political topics with their professors and on social media. What leads students to censor themselves in these situations remains unclear.

¹ Six of the schools surveyed received a “Warning” rating from FIRE for their speech policies. An overall score was calculated separately for these schools, comparing them only to each other.

HOW OFTEN ARE UVA STUDENTS SELF-CENSORING ON CAMPUS?

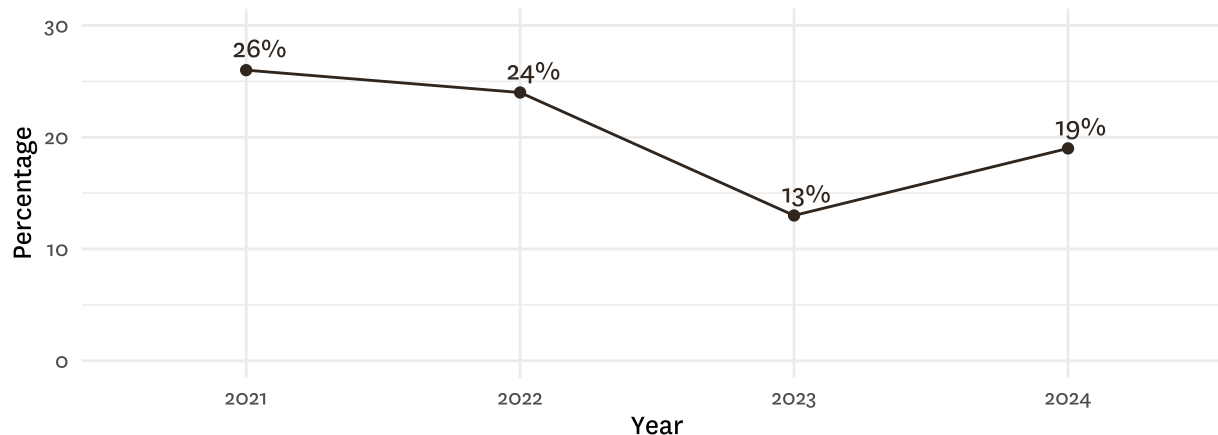
University of Virginia ranks 112 on the “Self-Censorship” component.²

UVA students report self-censoring in conversations with professors and peers less often than students nationally.

- 20% report self-censoring either “fairly” or “very” often during conversations with professors compared to 25% of students nationally.
- 22% report self-censoring either “fairly” or “very” often during classroom discussions compared to 26% of students nationally.
- 24% report self-censoring either “fairly” or “very” often during conversations with other students on campus. The same percentage as students nationally.

Self-censorship by UVA students has decreased since 2021. Three years ago, when asked how often they could not express their opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond, 26% of UVA students felt that way “very” or “fairly” often. This percentage decreased last year to 13% before increasing to 19% this year. Furthermore, prior to the encampment protests on campuses nationwide, only 11% felt that they could not express themselves. In the period after April 17, it rose to 25%.

FIGURE 1 Students Who Self-Censor Fairly of Very Often (%)



² We provide a definition of self-censorship before presenting students with the questions. Self-censorship is defined as follows: “Refraining from sharing certain views because you fear social (e.g. exclusion from social events), professional (e.g., losing job or promotion), legal (e.g., prosecution or fine), or violent (e.g., assault) consequences, whether in person or remotely (e.g., by phone or online), and whether the consequences come from state or non-state sources.”

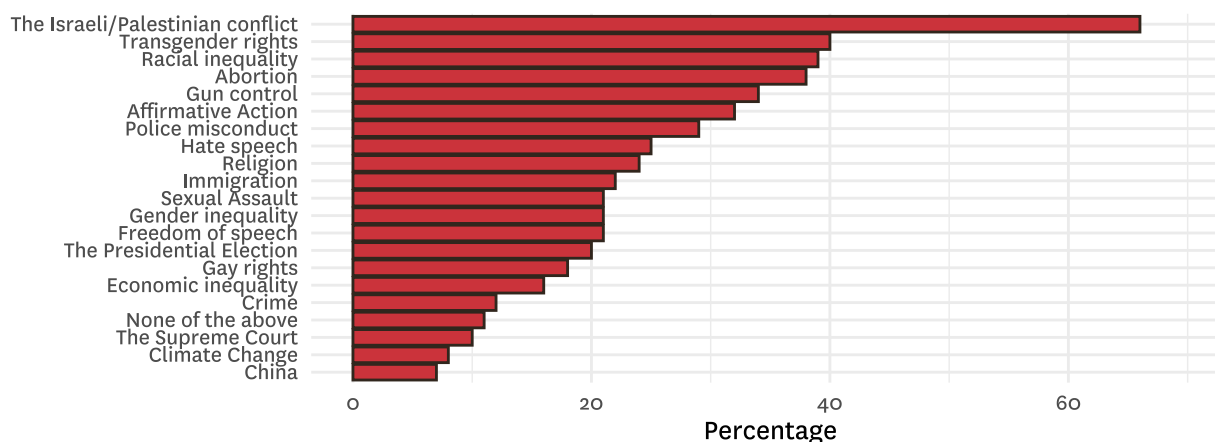
WHAT TOPICS ARE DIFFICULT FOR UVA STUDENTS TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS ABOUT?

University of Virginia ranks 54 on the “Openness” component.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is identified most frequently as a topic that is difficult for students to have an open and honest conversation on UVA’s campus (66%). In 2021, 30% of UVA students reported having difficulty having an open and honest conversation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on their campus. This percentage remained the same in 2022 before increasing in 2023 to 36%.

UVA students report less difficulty discussing other topics compared to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the lowest percentage (7%) of UVA students reporting the topic of China being difficult to discuss.

FIGURE 2 Topics UVA Students Have Difficulty Talking About (%)



WHICH SPEAKERS DO UVA STUDENTS CONSIDER CONTROVERSIAL?

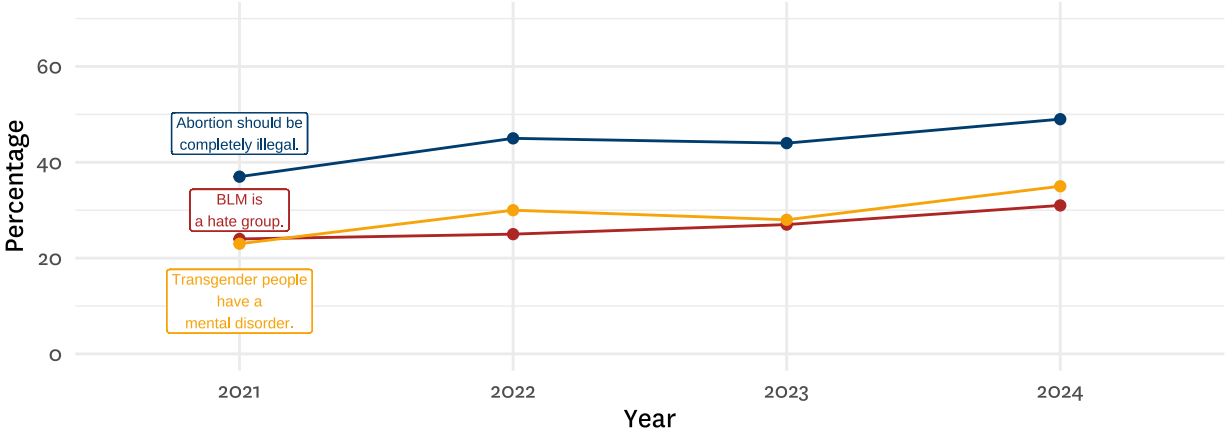
University of Virginia ranks 67 on “Mean Tolerance,” 70 on “Tolerance for Liberal Speakers,” 95 on “Tolerance for Conservative Speakers,” and 150 on “Tolerance Difference.”

When it comes to allowing controversial liberal speakers on campus, UVA students are tolerant. More than half (51%) would allow a speaker on campus who said that “the police are just as racist as the Ku Klux Klan,” and 55% would allow a speaker on campus who said that “the Catholic church is a pedophilic institution.” Allowing a speaker on campus who said that “children should be able to transition without parental consent” receives the most support (67%).

Conservative speakers, on the other hand, are not as tolerated by UVA students. Thirty-one percent of students would allow a speaker on campus who said that “Black Lives Matter is a hate group”; 35% would allow someone who said that “transgender people have a mental disorder”; and 49% would allow someone on campus who said that “abortion should be completely illegal.” Additionally, this year’s survey asked about two speakers relevant to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, though responses did not affect rankings. Forty-eight percent of UVA students report that a speaker who said that “collateral damage in

Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security” should be allowed on campus while 81% report that a speaker who said that “from the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” should be allowed on campus.

FIGURE 3 Conservative Speakers UVA Students Would Allow on Campus (%)



WHAT KINDS OF DISRUPTIVE CONDUCT DO UVA’S STUDENTS CONSIDER ACCEPTABLE?

University of Virginia ranks 200 on the “Disruptive Conduct” component.

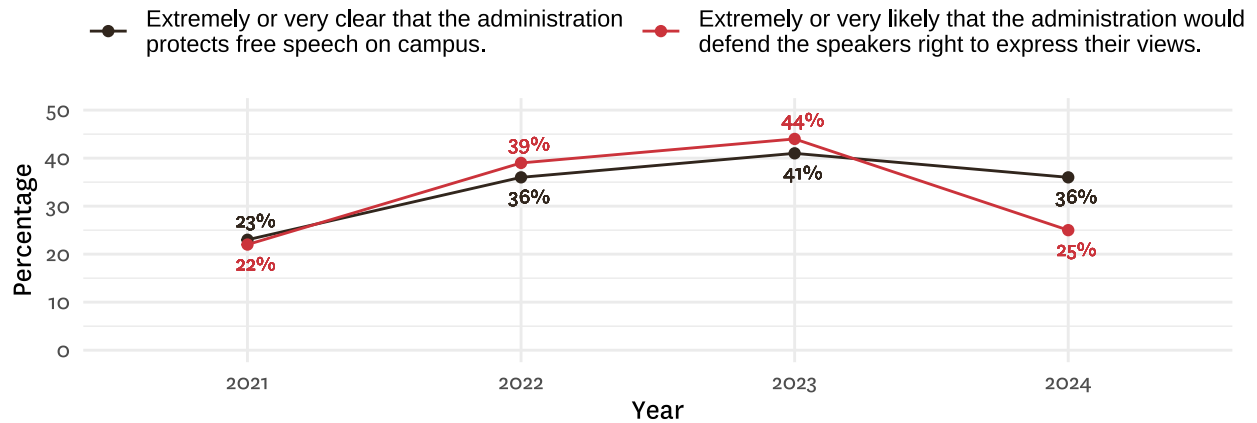
When compared to students nationally, UVA students are more likely to say that students using disruptive conduct to stop a campus speech was acceptable to some degree. Specifically, 77% of UVA students find shouting down a speaker acceptable compared to 69% of students nationally; 61% deem blocking other students from attending a campus speech to be acceptable compared to 51% of students nationally; and 34% view violence to stop a speech as acceptable compared to 32% of students nationally.

HOW IS UVA’S ADMINISTRATIVE STANCE ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH PERCEIVED?

University of Virginia ranks 97 on the “Administrative Support” component.

Thirty-six percent of UVA students find the administration either “very” or “extremely” clear in protecting freedom of speech, with an additional 44% considering it “somewhat” clear. In terms of the administration’s willingness to defend a speaker’s rights during controversies, 25% of UVA students believe this is either “very” or “extremely” likely, while 53% see it as “somewhat” likely. These percentages have declined since last year.

FIGURE 4 Student Perceptions of the Administration



Prior to the encampments, the percentage of students who thought it was “very” or “extremely” clear that the administration protects freedom of speech was continuing to improve at 44%; this perception dropped to 28% after the encampments started. Likewise, more students thought it was “very” or “extremely” likely the administration would protect speakers’ rights (36%) than after the encampments started (22%).

A ‘GREEN LIGHT’ SCHOOL WITH SOME CONTROVERSY

FIRE awards the University of Virginia our highest “green light” rating for maintaining no regulations on student expression that seriously imperil speech. As UVA puts it at the outset of its policy on Student Rights and Responsibilities:

“The University of Virginia is a community of scholars in which the ideals of freedom of inquiry, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, and freedom of the individual are sustained. The University is committed to supporting the exercise of any right guaranteed to individuals by the Constitution and the Code of Virginia and to educating students relative to their responsibilities.”

In addition, UVA has adopted a free speech policy substantially similar to the University of Chicago’s “Report of the Committee on Freedom of Expression,” better known as the “Chicago Statement,” a model free speech policy statement that affirms their commitment to free expression. In its free speech policy, UVA “unequivocally affirms its commitment to free expression and free inquiry.”

UVA has had a handful of speech controversies since 2020. In 2021, UVA removed a provocative poster from a student’s university residence door on the grounds it “incited” violence. In 2024, in a Title VI complaint and a subsequent lawsuit, Matan Goldstein, a first-year student at UVA, alleged that after he had told reporters he had been assaulted during an anti-Israel protest on campus, another student filed an Honor Code complaint against him, which resulted in an Honor Committee investigation. The charge was eventually dismissed.

UVA was penalized for both incidents.

Yet, in other instances, UVA has been supportive of expressive rights. In 2021, the Virginia GOP demanded a university investigation into Robert Kent Gooch Professor of Politics Larry Sabato for tweets about Donald Trump and other prominent Republicans. Sabato received no sanction and a university spokesperson said: “[F]ree expression and exchange of ideas is a core value of the school. There is nothing in our Code of Conduct that limits University employees from engaging in expression that is protected under the First Amendment.” In 2022, members of LGBTQ+ and progressive law student organizations objected to the Federalist Society’s invitation of Erin Hawley to discuss a pending Supreme Court case, *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*, characterizing Hawley’s perspective as anti-LGBTQ+. Hawley spoke successfully. In the same year, students called on the university to cancel a student organization’s plan to have former Vice President Mike Pence speak on campus. The students objected to Pence’s views on race, immigration, gender, and sexuality. Pence spoke successfully. In 2023, a state representative called on the university to condemn and “take action” against Students for Justice in Palestine for a letter the student group published praising the events of October 7th. The university President indicated in a statement, “I trust that we as a community can and will adhere to UVA’s longstanding tradition of not just allowing free speech, but promoting civil discourse, even when – perhaps especially when – we strongly disagree.” For these incidents, UVA received bonuses.

HOW CAN UVA IMPROVE?

The administration at UVA is mixed in their support of free expression. On the one hand, UVA’s speech code policies were given a green light rating from FIRE. On the other hand, the administration launched an investigation into one student and censored another. Such incidents might have contributed to the decreased faith students have in their school’s administration since last year.

Students have also expressed increased discomfort in expressing themselves around their peers, professors, and administrators out of concern for how they would respond. Although UVA students have reported less self-censorship than their counterparts nationally, the frequency of these occurrences has increased since last year. A notable portion of students also find it acceptable to use illiberal forms of protest to stop expression they disagree with.

UVA’s performance in “Comfort Expressing Ideas,” “Self-Censorship,” “Openness,” and “Disruptive Conduct” can be improved by emphasizing the history and importance of freedom of speech in classrooms and even making this information a core civics requirement for all undergraduate students. FIRE can provide the resources needed to establish these changes so that students can adopt the principles of the First Amendment on- and off-campus.

Methodology

THE COLLEGE FREE SPEECH RANKINGS SURVEY was developed by FIRE and administered by College Pulse. No donors to the project took part in designing or conducting the survey. The survey was fielded from January 25 through June 17, 2024. These data come from a sample of 58,807 undergraduates who were then enrolled full-time in four-year degree programs at one of a list of 258 colleges and universities in the United States. The margin of error for the U.S. undergraduate population is +/- 0.4 of a percentage point, and the margin of error for college student sub-demographics ranges from 2-5 percentage points.

The initial sample was drawn from College Pulse’s American College Student Panel™, which includes more than 850,000 verified undergraduate students and recent alumni from schools within a range of more than 1,500 two- and four-year colleges and universities in all 50 states. Panel members were recruited by a number of methods to help ensure student diversity in the panel population. These methods include web advertising, permission-based email campaigns, and partnerships with university-affiliated organizations. To ensure the panel reflects the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the American college population, College Pulse recruited panelists from a wide variety of institutions. The panel includes students attending large public universities, small private colleges, online universities, historically Black colleges such as Howard University, women’s colleges such as Smith College, and religiously-affiliated colleges such as Brigham Young University.

College Pulse uses a two-stage validation process to ensure that all its surveys include only students currently enrolled in two-year or four-year colleges or universities. Students are required to provide an “.edu” email address to join the panel and, for this survey, had to acknowledge that they are currently enrolled full-time in a four-year degree program. All invitations to complete surveys were sent using the student’s “.edu” email address or through a notification in the College Pulse app, available on iOS and Android platforms.

College Pulse applies a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The “weight” rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of four year undergraduate students in the United States.

This year College Pulse introduced a similar post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from multiple data sources, including the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). The “school universe weight” rebalances the sample based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IFP) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of four year undergraduate students from the 257 colleges and universities surveyed.

College Pulse also applies a post-stratification adjustment based on demographic distributions from the Current Population Survey (CPS), the National Postsecondary Student Aid Study (NPSAS), and the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). This “school weight” rebalances the sample from each individual school surveyed based on a number of important benchmark attributes, such as race, gender, class year, voter registration status, and financial aid status. The sample weighting is accomplished using an iterative proportional fitting (IPF) process that simultaneously balances the distributions of all variables to produce a representative sample of students at each individual school.

All weights are trimmed to prevent individual interviews from having too much influence on the final results and to ensure over-sampled population groups do not completely lose their voice.

The use of these weights in statistical analysis ensures that the demographic characteristics of the sample closely approximate the demographic characteristics of the target populations. Even with these adjustments, surveys may be subject to error or bias due to question wording, context, and order effects.

For further information, please see: <https://collegepulse.com/methodology>.

FREE SPEECH RANKINGS

The College Free Speech Rankings are based on a composite score of 14 components, seven of which assess student perceptions of different aspects of the speech climate on their campus. The other seven assess behavior by administrators, faculty, and students regarding free expression on campus. Higher scores indicate a better campus climate for free speech and expression.

Student Perceptions

The student perception components include:

- **Comfort Expressing Ideas:** Students were asked how comfortable they feel expressing their views on controversial topics in five different campus settings (e.g., “in class,” or “in the dining hall”). Options ranged from “very uncomfortable” to “very comfortable.” Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate greater comfort expressing ideas. The maximum number of points is 20.
- **Self-Censorship:** Students were provided with a definition of self-censorship and then asked how often they self-censored in three different settings on campus (e.g., “in a classroom discussion”). Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate self-censoring less often. The maximum number of points is 15.³
- **Tolerance for Liberal Speakers:** Students were asked whether three speakers espousing views potentially offensive to conservatives (e.g., “The police are just as racist as the Klu[sic] Klux Klan.”) should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether they personally agree with the speaker’s message. Options ranged from “definitely should not allow this speaker” to “definitely should allow

³ The self-censorship component was introduced this year and is a composite score of responses to the three questions that are presented after self-censorship is defined. In previous years other questions were used to measure self-censorship and they were factored into the “Comfort Expressing Ideas” component.

this speaker” and were coded so that higher scores indicate more tolerance of the speaker (i.e., more support for allowing the speaker on campus). The maximum number of points is 12.

- **Tolerance for Conservative Speakers:** Students were also asked whether three speakers espousing views potentially offensive to liberals (e.g., “Black Lives Matter is a hate group”) should be allowed on campus, regardless of whether they personally agree with the speaker’s message. Scoring was performed in the same manner as it was for the “Tolerance for Liberal Speakers” subcomponent, and the maximum number of points is 12.
- **Disruptive Conduct:** Students were asked how acceptable it is to engage in different methods of protest against a campus speaker, including “shouting down a speaker or trying to prevent them from speaking on campus,” “blocking other students from attending a campus speech,” and “using violence to stop a campus speech.” Options ranged from “always acceptable” to “never acceptable” and were coded so that higher scores indicate less acceptance of disruptive conduct. The maximum number of points is 12.
- **Administrative Support:** Students were asked how clear it is their administration protects free speech on campus and how likely the administration would be to defend a speaker’s right to express their views if a controversy over speech occurred on campus. For the administrative clarity question, options range from “not at all clear” to “extremely clear,” and for the administrative controversy question, options range from “not at all likely” to “extremely likely.” Options were coded so that higher scores indicate greater clarity and a greater likelihood of defending a speaker’s rights. The maximum number of points is 10.
- **Openness:** Finally, students were asked which of 20 issues (e.g., “abortion,” “freedom of speech,” “gun control,” and “racial inequality”), if any, are difficult to have open conversations about on campus. Responses were coded so that higher scores indicate fewer issues being selected. The maximum number of points is 20.

Two additional constructs, “Mean Tolerance” and “Tolerance Difference,” were computed from the “Tolerance for Liberal/Conservative Speaker” components. “Tolerance Difference” was calculated by subtracting “Tolerance for Conservative Speakers” from “Tolerance for Liberal Speakers” and then taking the absolute value (so that a bias in favor of either side would be treated the same).

Campus Behavioral Metrics

Schools received bonus points — described in more detail below — for unequivocally supporting free expression in response to speech controversies by taking the following actions indicative of a positive campus climate for free speech:

- Supporting free expression during a deplatforming campaign, as recorded in FIRE’s Campus Deplatforming database.⁴

⁴ A full list of all the deplatforming incidents that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1ish8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj10Oa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=1964386004#gid=1964386004>. The full Campus Deplatforming database is available on FIRE’s website at <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/campus-deplatforming-database>.

- Supporting a scholar whose speech rights were threatened during a free speech controversy, as recorded in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database.⁵
- Supporting students and student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.⁶

Schools were penalized — described in more detail below — for taking the following actions indicative of poor campus climate for free speech:

- Successfully deplatforming a speaker, as recorded in FIRE's Campus Deplatforming database.
- Sanctioning a scholar (e.g., placing under investigation, suspending, or terminating a scholar), as recorded in FIRE's Scholars Under Fire database.
- Sanctioning a student or student groups, as recorded in the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings behavioral metrics documentation that is available online.

To be included in this year's rankings, an incident that resulted in a bonus or penalty had to have been recorded by June 15, 2024, and had to have been fully assessed by FIRE's research staff, who determined whether the incident warranted inclusion.

In response to the encampment protests, FIRE and College Pulse reopened the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings survey on any campus with an encampment. This allowed us to collect survey data from students while the encampments were taking place.⁷ That means that this year's College Free Speech Rankings provide a treasure trove of data on the evolving state of free expression at American colleges and universities.

FIRE's Spotlight ratings — our ratings of the written policies governing student speech at nearly 500 institutions of higher education in the United States — also factored into each school's overall score. Three substantive ratings are possible: “red light,” “yellow light,” and “green light.” A “red light” rating indicates that the institution has at least one policy that both clearly and substantially restricts freedom of speech. A “yellow light” rating indicates that an institution maintains at least one policy that places a clear restriction on a more limited amount of protected expression, or one that, by virtue of vague wording, could too easily be used to restrict protected expression. A “green light” rating indicates that an institution maintains no policies that seriously threaten speech, although this rating does not indicate whether a college actively supports free expression.⁸

5 A full list of all the scholar sanction attempts that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i5h8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj1oOa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=1204583933#gid=1204583933>. The full Scholars Under Fire database is available on FIRE's website at <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/scholars-under-fire>.

6 All data reported in this section reflect the Students Under Fire database as of June 15, 2024. A full list of all the student sanction attempts that impacted the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings is available here: <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1i5h8y1M4GFv5FQzyx6lLZqHj1oOa1YQJOYvozCqAzE8/edit?gid=472255842#gid=472255842>. The full Students Under Fire database is currently internal to FIRE but will be released in full in early 2025.

7 Schools were not penalized for how they handled the encampment protests. As this report demonstrates, the impact of the encampment protests on the campus speech climate is captured by responses to survey questions that ask students about their confidence in that their college administration protects speech rights on campus; their comfort expressing controversial political views; and, their frequency of self-censorship. Deplatformings that occurred during the encampment protests were also still included in the calculation of the 2025 College Free Speech Rankings.

8 See: Using FIRE's Spotlight Database. Available online: <https://www.thefire.org/research-learn/using-fires-spotlight-database>.

Finally, a fourth rating, “Warning,” is assigned to a private college or university when its policies clearly and consistently state that it prioritizes other values over a commitment to free speech. “Warning” schools, therefore, were not ranked, and their overall scores are presented separately in this report.⁹

For this year’s rankings, the cutoff date for assessing a school’s speech code policies was June 15, 2024. Any changes to a school’s Spotlight rating that occurred since then will be reflected in the 2026 College Free Speech Rankings.

Overall Score

To create an overall score for each college, we first summed the following student subcomponents: “Comfort Expressing Ideas,” “Self-Censorship,” “Mean Tolerance,” “Disruptive Conduct,” “Administrative Support,” and “Openness.” Then, we subtracted the “Tolerance Difference.” By including the “Mean Tolerance” (as opposed to including “Tolerance for Liberal Speakers” and “Tolerance for Conservative Speakers” separately) and subtracting the “Tolerance Difference,” the score accounted for the possibility that ideologically homogeneous student bodies may result in a campus that *appears* to have a strong culture of free expression but is actually hostile to the views of an ideological minority — whose views students may almost never encounter on campus.

Then, to further account for the speech climate on an individual campus, we incorporated behavioral components. A school earned two bonus points each time it unequivocally defended free expression during a campus speech controversy — a rating of “High Honors” for its public response to a speech controversy. For instance, when the student government at Arizona State University opposed a registered student group’s invitation to Mohammed el-Kurd to speak on campus, and other members of the campus community petitioned the university to disinvite el-Kurd, a university spokesperson responded:

The university is committed to a safe environment where the free exchange of ideas can take place . . . As a public university, ASU adheres to the First Amendment and strives to ensure the fullest degree of intellectual freedom and free expression. All individuals and groups on campus have the right to express their opinions, whatever those opinions may be, as long as they do not violate the student code of conduct, student organization policies, and do not infringe on another student’s individual rights.

el-Kurd spoke successfully on campus, and we awarded ASU two bonus points.

A school earned one bonus point for responding to a speech controversy by making a public statement that strongly defends the First Amendment but is not as full-throated a defense as a “High Honors” statement. These statements received the rating of “Honors.” For instance, at New York University, NYU Law Students for Palestine and Jewish Law Students for a Free Palestine called for the cancellation of an event featuring Robert Howse and Michal Cotler-Wunsh, because Cotler-Wunsh supports the occupation of Palestine. The event was co-sponsored by a student group, NYU’s Jewish Law Students Association, as well as the president’s office and the Bronfman Center for Jewish Life. NYU did not cancel the event, and protesters interrupted Cotler-Wunsh several times during his remarks before voluntarily leaving, allowing the event to resume and conclude successfully. The dean of the law school said the following in response:

9 The Spotlight Database is available on FIRE’s website: <https://www.thefire.org/resources/spotlight/>.

The principles of free speech and inquiry are complemented by debate, challenge and protest . . . While dissent may be vigorous, it must not interfere with the speaker’s ability to communicate — which is exactly why, should those interrupters not have left on their own accord, they would be subject to discipline.

We awarded one point for this response, which occurred in 2024, then we set this bonus to decrease by one-quarter of a point for each year that passes.

We also applied penalties when a school sanctioned a scholar, student, or student group, or deplatformed a speaker.

A school lost up to five points each time it sanctioned (e.g., investigated, suspended, or terminated) a scholar. When the sanction did not result in termination the school received a penalty of one point, which we set to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year: This meant penalizing a school a full point for sanctioning a scholar in 2024, three-quarters of a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2023, half a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2022, and one-quarter of a point for sanctioning a scholar in 2021. However, if the administration terminated the scholar, we subtracted three points, and if that scholar was tenured, we subtracted five points. We applied full penalties for termination for four years, then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year. So, a penalty for termination that occurred in 2020 has just now started to decay.

A school lost up to three points for sanctioning students or student groups. When the sanction did not result in expulsion, the revocation of acceptance, the denial or revoking of recognition, suspension, or termination of a student’s campus employment (e.g. as a resident assistant) the school received a penalty of one point. Like with scholar sanctions that did not result in termination, we set these penalties to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. If a school suspended a student or terminated their campus employment, we penalized it two points. We also set these penalties to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. However, if a school denied or revoked a student group’s recognition, expelled a student, or revoked their acceptance, it was penalized three points. We applied these penalties in full for four years, and then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year.

Regarding deplatforming attempts, a school was penalized one point if an invited speaker withdrew because of the controversy caused by their upcoming appearance on campus or if an event was postponed in response to a controversy. We set this penalty to decrease by a quarter of a point each year. Schools where an attempted disruption occurred received a penalty of two points. We applied this penalty for four years, then set it to decrease by one-quarter of a point each year. Schools with deplatforming attempts that resulted in event cancellations, preemptive rejections of speakers, removal of artwork on display, the revocation of a speaker’s invitation, or a substantial event disruption were penalized three points. We applied these penalties in full for four years, then set them to decline by one-quarter of a point each year.

After we applied bonuses and penalties, we standardized each school’s score by group — “Warning” schools and other schools — making the average score in each group 50.00 and the standard deviation 10.00. Following standardization, we added one standard deviation to the final score of colleges who received a “green light” rating for their speech codes. We also subtracted half a standard deviation from the final score of colleges that received a “yellow light” rating, one standard deviation from the final score of schools that received a “red light” rating, and two standard deviations from schools that received a “Warning” rating.

$$\text{Overall Score} = (50 + (Z_{\text{Raw Overall Score}})(10)) + \text{FIRE Rating}$$

Topline Results

How clear is it to you that your college administration protects free speech on campus?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all clear	11	4
Not very clear	42	15
Somewhat clear	121	44
Very clear	83	30
Extremely clear	17	6

If a controversy over offensive speech were to occur on your campus, how likely is it that the administration would defend the speaker's right to express their views?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Not at all likely	12	4
Not very likely	50	18
Somewhat likely	146	53
Very likely	59	22
Extremely likely	7	3

How comfortable would you feel doing the following on your campus? [Presented in randomized order]
Publicly disagreeing with a professor about a controversial political topic.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	64	23
Somewhat uncomfortable	107	39
Somewhat comfortable	75	27
Very comfortable	29	11

Expressing disagreement with one of your professors about a controversial political topic in a written assignment.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	42	15
Somewhat uncomfortable	85	31
Somewhat comfortable	113	41
Very comfortable	34	12

Expressing your views on a controversial political topic during an in-class discussion.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	49	18
Somewhat uncomfortable	97	35
Somewhat comfortable	107	39
Very comfortable	22	8

Expressing your views on a controversial political topic to other students during a discussion in a common campus space such as a quad, dining hall, or lounge.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	35	13
Somewhat uncomfortable	94	34
Somewhat comfortable	113	41
Very comfortable	32	12

Expressing an unpopular political opinion to your fellow students on a social media account tied to your name.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Very uncomfortable	89	32
Somewhat uncomfortable	83	30
Somewhat comfortable	79	29
Very comfortable	24	9

On your campus, how often have you felt that you could not express your opinion on a subject because of how students, a professor, or the administration would respond?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	35	13
Rarely	110	40
Occasionally, once or twice a month	79	29
Fairly often, a couple times a week	46	17
Very often, nearly every day	5	2

This next series of questions asks you about self-censorship in different settings. For the purpose of these questions, self-censorship is defined as follows:

Refraining from sharing certain views because you fear social (e.g., exclusion from social events), professional (e.g., losing job or promotion), legal (e.g., prosecution or fine), or violent (e.g., assault) consequences, whether in person or remotely (e.g., by phone or online), and whether the consequences come from state or non-state sources. [Presented in randomized order]

How often do you self-censor during conversations with other students on campus?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	20	7
Rarely	106	38
Occasionally, once or twice a month	84	31
Fairly often, a couple times a week	52	19
Very often, nearly every day	14	5

How often do you self-censor during conversations with your professors?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	22	8
Rarely	102	37
Occasionally, once or twice a month	98	36
Fairly often, a couple times a week	33	12
Very often, nearly every day	21	8

How often do you self-censor during classroom discussions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	15	6
Rarely	95	35
Occasionally, once or twice a month	106	39
Fairly often, a couple times a week	43	16
Very often, nearly every day	15	6

How acceptable would you say it is for students to engage in the following action to protest a campus speaker?
[Presented in randomized order]

Shouting down a speaker to prevent them from speaking on campus.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	18	6
Sometimes acceptable	88	32
Rarely acceptable	108	39
Never acceptable	61	22

Blocking other students from attending a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	10	4
Sometimes acceptable	67	24
Rarely acceptable	91	33
Never acceptable	107	39

Using violence to stop a campus speech.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Always acceptable	12	5
Sometimes acceptable	31	11
Rarely acceptable	50	18
Never acceptable	181	66

Student groups often invite speakers to campus to express their views on a range of topics. Regardless of your own views on the topic, should your school **ALLOW** or **NOT ALLOW** a speaker on campus who promotes the following idea? [Presented in randomized order]

Transgender people have a mental disorder.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	92	33
Probably should not allow this speaker	86	31
Probably should allow this speaker	69	25
Definitely should allow this speaker	27	10

Abortion should be completely illegal.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	58	21
Probably should not allow this speaker	82	30
Probably should allow this speaker	93	34
Definitely should allow this speaker	41	15

Black Lives Matter is a hate group.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	83	30
Probably should not allow this speaker	106	38
Probably should allow this speaker	62	22
Definitely should allow this speaker	23	9

The Catholic church is a pedophilic institution.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	30	11
Probably should not allow this speaker	94	34
Probably should allow this speaker	115	42
Definitely should allow this speaker	35	13

The police are just as racist as the Klu Klux Klan.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	40	15
Probably should not allow this speaker	94	34
Probably should allow this speaker	106	39
Definitely should allow this speaker	34	12

Children should be able to transition without parental consent.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	30	11
Probably should not allow this speaker	60	22
Probably should allow this speaker	126	46
Definitely should allow this speaker	58	21

Collateral damage in Gaza is justified for the sake of Israeli security.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	54	20
Probably should not allow this speaker	90	33
Probably should allow this speaker	90	33
Definitely should allow this speaker	41	15

From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.

Response	Frequency	Percent
Definitely should not allow this speaker	10	4
Probably should not allow this speaker	42	15
Probably should allow this speaker	141	51
Definitely should allow this speaker	82	30

Some students say it can be difficult to have conversations about certain issues on campus. Which of the following issues, if any, would you say are difficult to have an open and honest conversation about on your campus? [Presented in randomized order with none of the above always listed last]

Abortion

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	169	62
Yes	104	38

Affirmative action

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	184	67
Yes	89	32

China

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	255	93
Yes	18	7

Climate change

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	251	91
Yes	22	8

Crime

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	240	87
Yes	33	12

Economic inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	230	84
Yes	43	16

Freedom of speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	216	79
Yes	57	21

Gay rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	224	81
Yes	49	18

Gender inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	214	78
Yes	59	21

Gun control

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	180	66
Yes	93	34

Hate speech

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	203	74
Yes	70	25

Immigration

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	213	77
Yes	60	22

The Israeli/Palestinian conflict

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	92	34
Yes	181	66

The Presidential Election

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	218	79
Yes	55	20

Police misconduct

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	193	70
Yes	80	29

Racial inequality

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	166	60
Yes	107	39

Religion

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	206	75
Yes	67	24

Sexual assault

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	214	78
Yes	59	21

The Supreme Court

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	246	89
Yes	28	10

Transgender rights

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	164	60
Yes	109	40

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	243	88
Yes	30	11

Which of the following groups on your campus should be able to register as student organizations and receive student activity fees? [Presented in randomized order with none of the above always listed last]

Asian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	69	25
Yes	204	74

Black or African American student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	73	27
Yes	200	73

Hispanic/Latino student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	66	24
Yes	207	75

Sororities or fraternities

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	88	32
Yes	185	67

LGBTQ+ student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	71	26
Yes	202	73

Christian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	76	28
Yes	197	72

Jewish student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	77	28
Yes	196	71

Muslim/Islamic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	78	28
Yes	195	71

Hindu student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	78	29
Yes	195	71

Atheist/agnostic/secular student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	91	33
Yes	182	66

Republican student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	89	33
Yes	184	67

Democratic student groups.

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	81	29
Yes	192	70

Politically conservative student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	89	32
Yes	184	67

Politically liberal student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	91	33
Yes	182	66

Black Lives Matter student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	83	30
Yes	190	69

Pro-Israeli student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	117	43
Yes	156	57

Pro-Palestinian student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	96	35
Yes	177	64

Other student groups

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	115	42
Yes	158	57

None of the above

Response	Frequency	Percent
No	254	92
Yes	19	7

How often, if at all, do you hide your political beliefs from your professors in an attempt to get a better grade?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	75	27
Rarely	101	37
Occasionally	46	17
Fairly often, a couple times a week	40	15
Very often, nearly every day	10	4

Have you ever been involved in publicly calling out, punishing, or “canceling” someone or a group for inappropriate statements or actions?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	37	13
No	235	85

Thinking of the last incident where someone was publicly called out, punished, or “canceled” for their statements or actions, would you say the consequence or impact on the person was...

Response	Frequency	Percent
Too lenient	34	12
About right	117	42
Too harsh	121	44

How often, if ever, have you personally been offended by perspectives shared by peers or classmates when in the classroom?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	54	20
Rarely	129	47
Occasionally	72	26
Fairly often, a couple times a week	12	5
Very often, nearly every day	3	1

From what you know about the situation in the Middle East, do your sympathies lie more with the Israelis or more with the Palestinians?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Israelis	27	10
Palestinians	116	42
Both equally	55	20
Neither	24	9
Don't know	50	18

Regardless of your overall feelings toward the Israelis and the Palestinians, who do you think is more responsible for the 2023 outbreak of violence in the Middle East: Israel or Hamas?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Israel	83	30
Hamas	80	29
Both equally	38	14
Don't know	72	26

How often do you attend church or religious services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Never	95	34
Less than once a year	24	9
Once or twice a year	36	13
Several times a year	44	16
Once a month	18	7
2-3 times a month	15	6
About weekly	21	8
Weekly	10	4
Several times a week	6	2

Are you currently a member of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent
Yes	15	5
No	254	92

Are you a veteran of the armed services?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Yes	6	2	2
No	262	95	98

How often would you say that you feel anxious?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	7	2	11
Less than half the time	19	7	30
About half the time	8	3	12
Most of the time, nearly every day	20	7	32
Always	10	4	15

How often would you say that you feel lonely or isolated?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	5	2	12
Less than half the time	20	7	44
About half the time	14	5	32
Most of the time, nearly every day	5	2	11

How often would you say that you feel like you have no time for yourself?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	7	3	11
Less than half the time	21	8	32
About half the time	21	7	31
Most of the time, nearly every day	13	5	20
Always	4	2	6

How often would you say that you feel depressed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	14	5	33
Less than half the time	18	7	42
About half the time	9	3	22
Most of the time, nearly every day	1	0	2
Always	0	0	1

How often would you say that you feel stressed, frustrated, or overwhelmed?

Response	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Never	1	0	1
Less than half the time	20	7	34
About half the time	14	5	25
Most of the time, nearly every day	21	8	37
Always	1	1	3



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